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KOSYGIN IS COOL TO MISSILE CURB

In London, He Calls Defense
Build-Up Less Perilous
Than Offensive Arms

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Special to The New York Times

LONDON, Feb. 9 — Premier Alexei N. Kosygin suggested at a news conference today that defensive antiballistic missile systems were less dangerous to mankind than offensive systems and therefore more desirable even if they should prove more costly.

While avoiding a direct answer to a question on the subject, he gave no encouragement to hopes for a moratorium on antiballistic missile defense development as a means of limiting the arms race between the great powers.

[In Washington, the Defense Department said that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had recommended heavy protection against missiles for 50 of the nation's largest cities.]

Mr. Kosygin's remarks were made at a news conference given by the Foreign Press Association. More than 500 reporters watched him answer extemporaneously for more than an hour.

U.S. Seeks Understanding

United States officials have tentatively sought an understanding with the Soviet Union that would bar a new expensive race in the construction of antiballistic missile systems. Washington officials have reported that Moscow has begun installing such systems in some parts of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet leader did say, however, that he foresaw the conclusion "soon" of a treaty to bar the spread of nuclear weapons.

The most important aspect of such a treaty from the Soviet point of view, he made clear, is to keep nuclear weapons out of German hands.

The danger that the Soviet Union was beginning to build an antiballistic missile defense system was reported by President Johnson in his State of the Union Message on Jan. 10.

Limited Antimissile System

He said that while increasing their offensive missile capabilities, the Russians had begun to place a "limited antimissile defense" near Moscow. He said the United States was not prepared to spend great amounts of money now on such a defense system.

The Soviet Premier declined to reply directly on what he acknowledged as "an important problem of military policy." Instead he asked this question:

"What heightens military tension in the world more: an offensive or a defensive system?"

His reply was that "a system that serves to ward off an attack does not heighten the tension but serves to lessen the possibility of an attack that

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may kill large numbers of people."

It has been argued that if either the United States or the Soviet Union built an antimissile defense system it would upset the existing "balance of terror" because the country with an improved defense might then dare to strike the first blow without fear of being wiped out by reprisal action. A new phase in the arms race would thereby be opened.

Apart from the dangers implicit in such a new phase, economists have boggled at the stupendous cost that would be involved in providing a country with an antimissile defense system.

Premier Kosygin dismissed the "cost" argument.

It might be cheaper to build

offensive than defensive systems, he said, "but this is not the criterion upon which one should base oneself in deciding this problem."

He suggested there were "other ways" of solving the problem. He said he favored "an end to nuclear armaments and total destruction of nuclear stockpiles"—a familiar Soviet position in disarmament talks.

'We Have Plenty'

He noted that he was arguing from strength, not weakness. "We take this position not because we have too few weapons but because we have plenty."

The Soviet Premier insisted that the spread of nuclear weapons "must be banned."

Relating this issue to his reply on whether there could be a moratorium on development of an antimissile defense system, he said that here, too, the real answer was that "mankind must do away with nuclear weapons if it is to survive."

He said recent discussions indicated that an agreement would

soon be reached "whether West Germany likes it or not." He added: "The Soviet Union has no intention of ever allowing the Federal German Republic to gain access to nuclear weapons."

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